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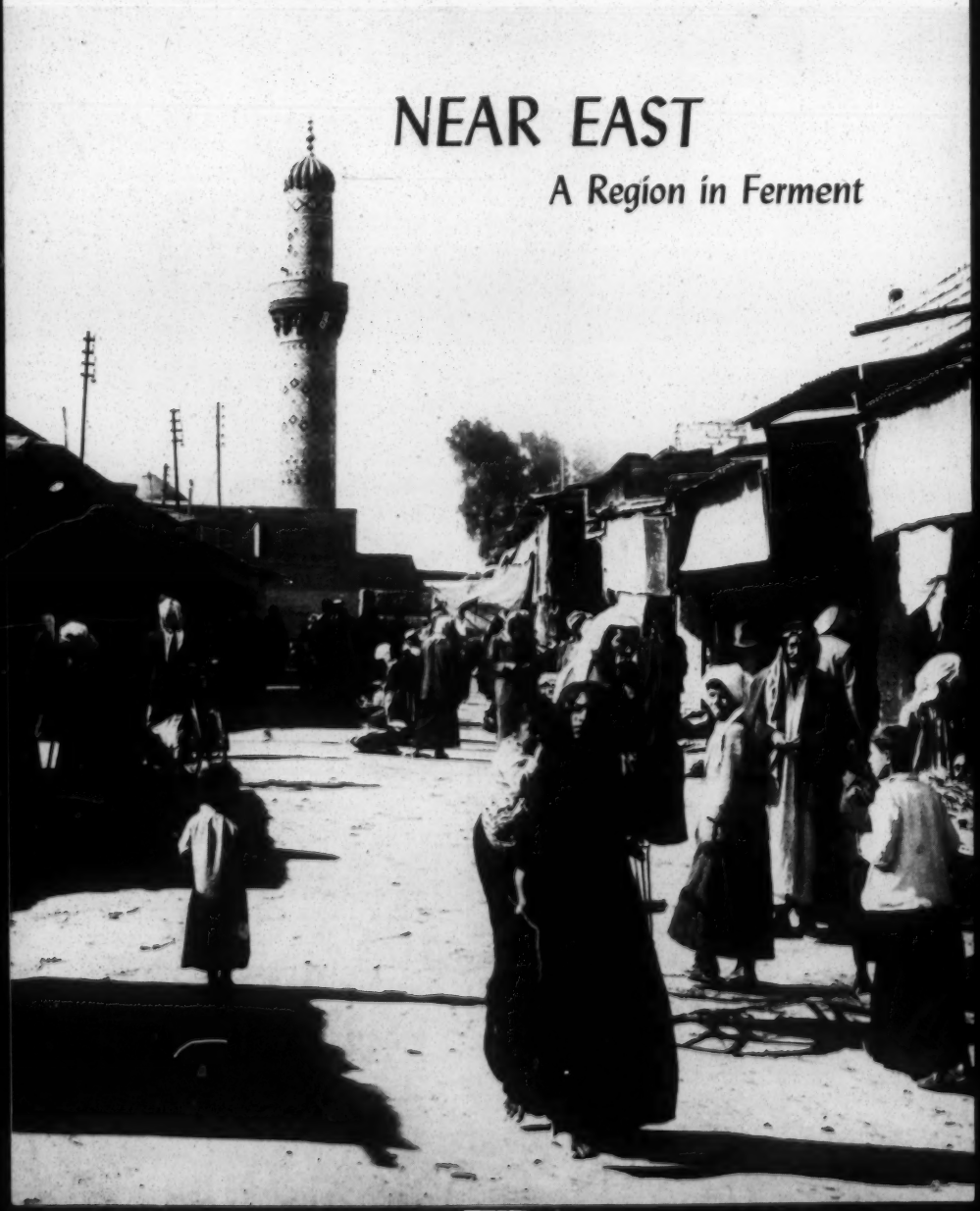
NEAR EAST

A Region in Ferment



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER B. ANTHONY STEWART

Egypt Reaches for New Arab Empire

THE NATIONAL Geographic Society includes the following countries in the Near East: Egypt, the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Turkey.

Egypt takes first place in this survey because it has assumed political leadership of the Arab nations—all the above except Israel, Iran, and Turkey. Early this year, Syria joined it to form the United Arab Republic. Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of the Republic and spokesman for the Arab nationalist movement, seeks to rid the Near East of foreign influence and build a modern counterpart of the Arab Empire that once dominated a large part of the world.

But at home, Egypt has the worst food problem. The delta and narrow valley of the River Nile, a strip of fertile land threading the desert, must support teeming millions while providing the country's only significant export, two fifths of the world's long-staple cotton. Worshipped by ancient Egyptians as the source of life itself, the Nile flows past monuments left by one of the world's oldest civilizations.

In death as well as life, Egyptians must conserve every possible square foot of watered soil. The picture above shows a village set on the desert sand to avoid taking any tillable area. In the center stand the domed roofs of a cemetery.

Egypt strives to overlay its ancient way of life with modern industry. But steady population increases outstrip the land's productivity. Egypt's peasants, numbering 17,000,000 out of a population of 24,000,000, see little chance of relief from poverty, disease, and malnutrition.

Cairo's luxury hotels and bulging shops, largely patronized by Westerners, contrast vividly with the squalor of the villages. But behind the show places of Egypt's largest city sprawl crowded slums where holy men chant, dervishes whirl on the steps of mosques, and throngs wistfully eye bazaars piled high with merchandise.

Nasser's pride is the Suez Canal, built by French and British capital but controlled completely by Egypt since 1956. It carries more traffic than the Panama Canal and is open to ships of all nations except Israel. Egypt, faced with a chronic shortage of foreign exchange, welcomes the money the canal brings in. Some of it may be used to finance reclamation projects and other works to improve the lot of the *fellahin*, or peasants.

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Mounting Pressures Keep World on Edge

FOLLOWING the Age of Discovery, proud and self-centered Europeans looked at the globe and divided it into logical and convenient regions. From their point of view the "Near East" was that portion of the world lying between them and India. It was a region Europeans had almost always misunderstood and suspected, even though their religion and much of their civilization stemmed from its deserts and ancient river valleys. It loomed close enough to home for fear; each region launched holy wars against the other.

Islam, a religion and a way of life, still unites and motivates the Near East. Add to old differences the recent galling decades of colonialism, the second rise of Arab nationalism, the creation of Israel, the tug of war over oil, the uneasy standoff between Russia and the West, and it is easy to see why the Near East has the whole world jittery.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER JOSEPH BAYLOR ROBERTS

BURRI, MAGNUM (ABOVE); COVER—JEAN AND FRANC SHOR, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

Egypt's *fellah*, Araby's Bedouin, and Baghdad's shopkeeper have their own problems—usually related to where the next meal is coming from. Poverty and illiteracy challenge many lands. Some use oil revenues to build public works and improve education. Iraq meets the 20th century halfway, builds modern skyscrapers (above) with human-power methods of antiquity. Egypt backs Pan-Arabism, a movement that already has wrested the Suez Canal (left) from European hands.

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Dates and Oil Enrich Iraq

EIGHTY percent of the world's dates are harvested in Iraq from trees like this one. Besides dates, Iraq grows wheat, barley, rice, and other foodstuffs and could produce far more than it does now with increased irrigation and better farming methods. The country's 6,500,000 people, some desert nomads, some settled farmers, are of many races and religions—variety that is a legacy of centuries of strife and conquest.

Baghdad, seat of the caliphs who inspired the fables of *The Arabian Nights*, was capital of the fabled Arab Empire that dominated the Near East, other parts of Asia, all of North Africa and Spain in the eighth and ninth centuries. But this thousand-year-old glory is recent history in Iraq—civilizations along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flourished five thousand years ago. Nebuchadnezzar built the fabled hanging gardens in Babylon, south of present-day Baghdad. Tradition says that the Garden of Eden bloomed in what is now desert in the same region.

In Biblical times, irrigation and drainage canals criss-crossed Iraq's parched lands and produced crops where little or nothing grows today.

Like other oil-rich countries in the Near East, Iraq uses petroleum revenues to finance development projects and raise the living standard of its people. Seventy percent of the country's estimated $200,000,000 oil profits goes to ambitious reclamation projects. Meanwhile, young Iraqis like those below get technical training from oil companies—training valuable to them and to their country as both build for the future.

Last July, a short, bloody revolt toppled Faisal II, Iraq's king. The new regime apparently has allowed the country to be swept into the tide of Arab nationalism.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER JOSEPH BAYLOR ROBERTS

FOR THE STORY of the great civilizations that flourished in the Near East in antiquity, read the National Geographic Society's book, *Everyday Life in Ancient Times* ($6 post paid). Near East history and geography are combined on the 10-color wall map *Lands of the Bible Today* (paper, $1; rolled fabric, $2). See also, in the *National Geographic Magazine*, "Iraq, Where Oil and Water Mix," October, 1958; and "Young-Old Lebanon Lives by Trade," April, 1958 (Each, $1).

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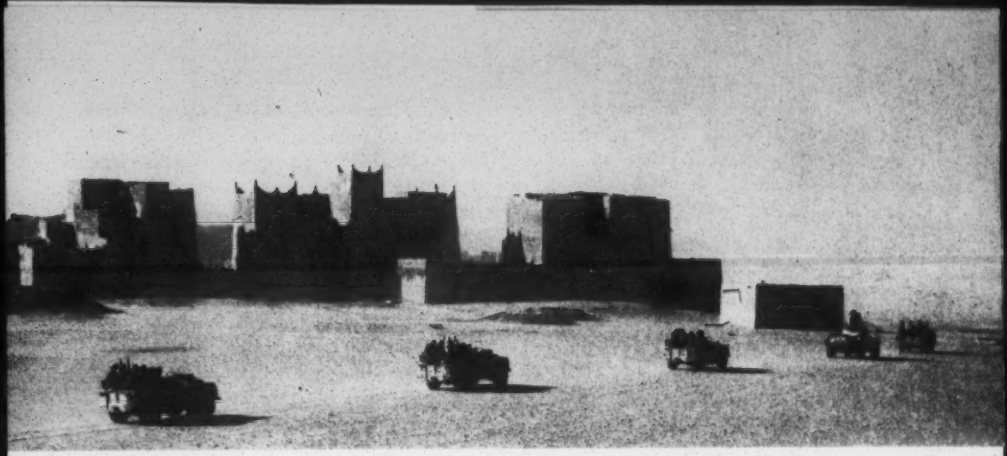

BRIAN BRAKE, MAGNUM

Arabia's Sands Float on Ocean of Oil

PROWLING from an ancient fortress on desert patrol, armored trucks point toward the trackless, sandy wastes of the Arabian Peninsula. This arid region, isolated and forgotten for centuries, gained world importance within the last thirty years. The reason, in one word: oil.

Saudi Arabia, feudal kingdom that dominates the peninsula, shows a veneer of progress bought with oil revenues currently estimated at $300,000,000 a year. The Arabian American Oil Company, American corporation which produces petroleum under an agreement with the government, trains Arabs who operate heavy drilling rigs like the one at right.

Fierce nomadic Bedouins still roam the peninsula's interior. They raise sheep, goats, horses, and camels on sparse patches of desert grass.

These deserts were the fountainhead of Islam. Mohammed, the Prophet, who first preached the Moslem religion, lived in Mecca and Medina. After his death militant followers spread his teachings from Morocco to Java. Today 400,000,000 Moslems look toward Mecca in daily prayers and regard earthly life as incomplete without at least one pilgrimage to the holy city.

When the Turkish Empire fell after World War I, Great Britain inherited a guardian role over much of the Near East. But Aden Crown Colony, overlooking the straits connecting the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, is the only British holding

ARABIAN AMERICAN OIL CO.

today. Yemen, now affiliated with the United Arab Republic, pecks away at the British across a vague frontier. Yemen is ruled by an Imam, a priest-king similar to Tibet's Dalai Lama. Elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula, Muscat and Oman, and the Trucial Coast, scarcely touched by the twentieth century, cling to ancient Arab customs and traditions.

Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, tiny sheikdoms along the Persian Gulf, are buckets of sand on barrels of oil.

Arab Refugees Burden Impoverished Jordan

JORDAN, the Near East's stepchild, has teetered on the brink of extinction several times since it was created in 1919. Tiny and impoverished, Jordan has scant natural resources. It cannot grow enough to feed its people. Foreign subsidies finance the government.

In 1948, when British troops withdrew from Palestine, Jordan quickly occupied a strip west of the River Jordan much more valuable than all the rest of the country. Trebling its population, it inherited the problem of 367,000 Arab refugees from Israel. Idle in camps like the one at Nablus (right), refugees await the wheel of fate's next turn. Although supported largely by United Nations relief funds, the refugees tax Jordan's shaky economy and prevent anyone in the Near East from completely relaxing.

Jordan's ruler, youthful King Hussein, received help from Great Britain and the United States when his regime was threatened this summer by Arab nationalists.

JOHN SCOFIELD, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

Camels Clump Through Near East, Giving Transportation, Food, and Clothing

CAMELS such as those above make human existence possible in parts of the Near East. From the ungainly beasts, Arabs get transportation, hair for cloth, milk for drinking. The skin makes a tough leather; the bones substitute for ivory. But the camel's greatest gift is its ability to forego water on long journeys over the desert. Legend to the contrary, the camel does not carry water in its hump, which is a mass of fat. Nor does it have special water tanks in its stomach. It simply conserves water in its flesh, and wastes none in sweating. Broad-cushioned feet prevent the heavily loaded beast from sinking in desert sand. The camel is given to cussedness, and will kick or bite unwary handlers. Its appetite knows few limits—camels have been known to eat blankets, leather, and bones.

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NGS MAP

Near East Figures Reflect Area's Diversity

Country	Area Square Miles (Cultivated Land)	Population (Persons per Square Mile)	Capital	Chief Products
EGYPT*	386,100 (13,500)	24,000,000 (62)	Cairo	Cotton, food
SAUDI ARABIA	618,000 (oases)	6,000,000 (9.7)	Mecca and Riyadh	Oil, dates
YEMEN*	75,290	4,500,000 (59)	San'a	Cereals, coffee
IRAQ	171,600 (8,978)	6,500,000 (38)	Baghdad	Oil, cereals, dates
JORDAN	37,300	1,400,000 (37)	'Amman	Livestock, wheat, barley
ISRAEL	7,992 (1,440)	1,924,000 (240)	Jerusalem	Citrus, vegetables, textiles
LEBANON	4,015 (748)	1,500,000 (373)	Beirut	Wheat, fruit
SYRIA*	71,200 (2,520)	3,900,000 (54)	Damascus	Cotton, wheat, livestock
IRAN	629,000 (7,605)	18,945,000 (30)	Tehran	Oil, wool, cotton
TURKEY	300,000 (68,195)	24,800,000 (83)	Ankara	Textiles, tobacco, chrome

For comparative purposes, the United States, with an area of 3,022,387 square miles, has 174,800,000 persons, a density of 58 per square mile.

*Syria and Egypt have joined in the United Arab Republic. Yemen is affiliated with them in the United Arab States.

The coast of the Arabian Peninsula includes, in addition to Saudi Arabia and Yemen, several small sheikdoms and protectorates (not shown on map). Most important of these to outsiders are the oil-producing, British-protected areas of Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar.

Troubled Lebanon Thrives on Commerce

LONG BEFORE the Lebanese government called in United States Marines to preserve peace in its ancient land, Lebanon and America had close ties.

The campus of the American University at Beirut, the capital, would not seem out of place in Southern California—and the students would feel at home in an American classroom.

One of the Near East's most important institutions of higher learning, the university was founded in 1866 by an American missionary. It draws over 2,000 students from all parts of the region for a basic liberal arts education or graduate study, and equips them to become leaders in their native countries. Dr. Charles Malik, the Lebanese envoy currently president of the U. N. General Assembly, graduated from American University. He later served as Dean of Graduate Studies there.

THOMAS J. ABERCROMBIE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

Tiny Lebanon owes its fortunes to trade, both in commodities and ideas. Phoenician sailors, ancestors of today's Lebanese, established merchant routes in the days of the Greek and Roman empires. They sailed frail galleys as far as Britain. Today the bustling country remains a center of commerce for the entire Near East.

The Lebanese fiercely maintained their independence during the years of Arab expansion. Christian sects, secure in mountain strongholds, fought off invaders until the ninth and tenth centuries when the Moslem faith and the Arabic language gradually penetrated the country. But Lebanon's Christians survived, a minority in an Arab world, and today make up nearly half the population.

When Crusaders sailed from Europe in the Middle Ages to conquer the Holy Land, many landed in Lebanon, establishing forts as bases for the campaigns which followed. The expansion of trade between Europe and Asia, another result of the Crusades, found Lebanon ready to take up its traditional role as middleman.

Caravan routes, like today's oil pipelines, crossed Lebanon to reach the Mediterranean Sea.

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Israel Fulfills Old Dreams, Builds a Land of Promise

FOR ALMOST 2,000 years, Israel was a state of mind. It existed only in the hopes of Jews around the world—hopes that had lasted since their ancestors were driven from the Promised Land.

Ten years ago—on April 24, 1948—this longing was satisfied by the creation of a Jewish state. Then began the great "ingathering" of Jews from all over the world. Pitiable survivors of Hitler's concentration camps; skilled workers from northern Europe; laborers from Yemen; shopkeepers from Cairo; all flocked in. Some, such as the strong-faced lady above, were well-to-do in their homelands but willingly lived in tents or huts to make Israel come true. Others settled in Jerusalem, below, which is half in Israel, half in Jordan. Barbed wire and machinegun posts cut the city in two.

In all, 896,355 immigrants—from 70 countries—arrived by the end of 1957. All went to work. Jews who stayed at home contributed money. They carved a vital, aggressive country out of old Palestine. Industries have multiplied. Automobiles, precision instruments, drugs, radios, refrigerators, and textiles are exported. Diamond cutting and polishing rank high among Israeli skills. Some oil has been found and the search continues.

Where centuries of soil abuse had left little but sand and rock, Israelis have more than doubled their cultivated area; more than tripled the amount of irrigated land; and almost tripled farm output. Still shaky financially, Israel looks forward with great hope.

MAYNARD OWEN WILLIAMS

JOHN SCOFIELD, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

IN THE LINEUP of the Near East, Israel is alone among avowed enemies. Even its capital, Jerusalem (left), is split into Jewish and Arab sectors, with a no-man's-land between them. War followed Israel's creation, and war or the threat of war has been her daily ration since. Farmers drive their tractors with rifles slung on their backs. Each youth has two trades, one of which is soldiering. But Israelis are confident of success. A 2,000-year-old dream is not easily given up.

Oil Smooths Iran's Path

STEEPED in oil and history, Iran is a great land bridge connecting Asia with the rest of the Near East and with Europe. It was formerly called Persia.

By Near East standards, Iran is rich. Petroleum, flowing since 1908, has financed ambitious economic programs. Jagged mountains have been conquered by railroads and by the vital oil pipes that carry Iran's wealth to the great refinery at Abadan.

Neatly mixing oil and water, the Iranians have devoted part of their royalties to irrigation projects, an important item in a country where only one third of the land can be cultivated.

Alone among the Near East countries, Iran has nationalized its oil. Foreigners still operate the main fields, but they must purchase the oil from Iranian companies, which also produce and market oil on their own.

Northern Iran, near the Caspian Sea, basks in subtropical luxuriance. Heavy rainfall and warm climate produce large crops of rice, oranges, tea, tobacco, and olives. The cold, barren mountain areas have scant rain, and support only a few nomads.

To the north looms Russia. Since tsarist times, the Russian Bear has looked longingly at Iran and its sea outlets to the south. Vast amounts of United States lend-lease equipment moved through Iran to Russian armies during World War II. Russia finally pulled its troops out of the country in 1946.

ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL COMPANY

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER JOSEPH BAYLOR ROBERTS

Iran once ruled the Near East. Under the first Darius and his successor, Xerxes, Persian armies held sway until 331 B.C. when Alexander the Great, a Greek, slashed with his army into the heart of the country and sacked Persepolis, the empire's capital. Ruins of the great city still stand (left). In the seventh century A. D. Arabs from the west swept across the plains, added Persia to their empire, and introduced the Moslem faith, still Iran's principal religion.

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MAYNARD OWEN WILLIAMS

Politics, Religion Link Syria to Egypt

CRUMBLING citadels like Aleppo's hilltop fortress (above) dot Syria, a country conquered, reconquered, and conquered again. Syrians like this one astride his donkey have kept to their Arab ways, clung to their Islamic religion. Their reward today is a Syria that not only is free but has voluntarily joined with Egypt to give all Arabs a stronger voice in world affairs.

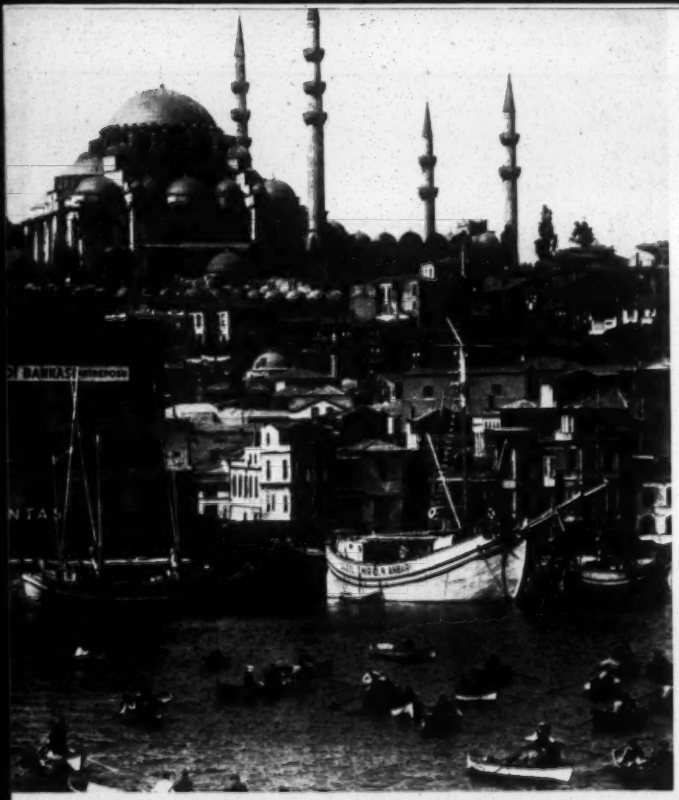
Much of the strife the country has known has been ignited by Syria's position between Europe, Africa, and Asia. Over its trails threaded caravans that made Damascus the center of Near East trade. These same paths bore religious thinkers, warriors, and traders who pollinated Western civilization with new ideas in medicine, mapmaking, hygiene.

When a sea route to India and China was discovered, Syria's prosperous overland trade dried up and the country fell back upon agriculture. Cultivation of the soil supports most of its inhabitants today. Water is a problem, but where the country borders the eastern Mediterranean, rainfall and irrigation bring harvests of cotton, wheat, corn, hemp, and barley.

Many farmers still guide wooden plows behind lumbering oxen, but others are turning to the tractor.

Behind the coastal mountains, in the desert that wedges between Turkey and Iraq, nomads graze sheep and goats as they have for centuries. From time to time the shepherd snatches a moment to pluck a few melancholy notes on his mandolin-like instrument.

JOHN SCOFIELD, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF



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Moslem Turks Look to West

GEOGRAPHICALLY a part of the Near East, Turkey stands apart from Arab lands as a nation that has wholeheartedly adopted Western ways. Although bordering Russia, the Turks remain staunchly allied with NATO and the United States. Symbolic of Turkey's course is the rooftop sign advertising American automobiles in the shadow of the minarets of Istanbul. This cosmopolitan center now echoes the snorts of bulldozers as well as the cries of the *muezzin* calling the faithful. A rejuvenation program replaces slums with modern buildings and scenic drives.

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